

BRUCE LEE ~ A NEW PERSPECTIVE

Dear Mr Cheung:

I am happy that after all these years I have finally had the chance to make contact with you. When I first met Bruce in 1959 he talked about you all the time. It was his feeling that you were the person with the greatest potential in the Wing Chun system.

He said that you had everything — speed, size, reach and power. He also said that you were very aggressive and that your fighting method was not to waste time on the outside, but to carry the fight to the opponent.

I was lucky to meet Bruce at a time when he needed a sounding-board, off which to reflect his ideas and his techniques and, as such, I got some really good insights into where it was that Bruce was taking his Gung Fu. When I first met him he had little idea of the potential that he himself had, and talked like he expected to find many highly skilled people in other styles who were far beyond him in skill. As time passed and he began to see that there weren't any other systems on the level of the Wing Chun in the United States, he began to teach less and less of what it was that he himself used in fights.

From what I have been able to piece together over the years, the method that I learned from Bruce when he first came to Seattle was based on the things that he had learned from you and Wong in Hong Kong — and that it was not common to the average Wing Chun man. The reason that I say this is because what I have seen in this country that is called Wing Chun is

vastly different from the early ideas of Bruce.

I always had the feeling that Bruce didn't know that much of the formal Wing Chun style because he kept telling me that every time he went back to Hong Kong that he learned some other parts of the system. What I always suspected was that Bruce had learned the most effective street-fighting applications of the system from you and Wong, and that this was the things that I learned from him in '59. A year or so later Bruce was off into experimenting with ideas and techniques from other styles, and the way that he was teaching had changed a lot.

In following his career throughout the years I noticed that he continued to gain in skill and technique, but that this wasn't reflected in his students. The reason that I always attached to this lacking in skill on the part of his students was that he was leaving out the basic Wing Chun-oriented principles upon which his own gains were made; plus the fact that Bruce hated to teach and didn't work too hard at it; and the fear that if anyone really got good that they might somehow use it against him. The latter reason wasn't even a remote possibility because none of his students were close to him in skill.

A couple of years ago I went down to check out his school in Los Angeles. I had never met Inosanto, Bruce's last assistant, so he didn't know me. I asked if my friend and I could sit down and watch and Inosanto said spectators were welcome. We watched

The accompanying feature is the edited text of a letter to Mr William Cheung, renowned Melbourne instructor of Wing Chun, from Jesse Glover. A well-known martial arts author and instructor, Jesse Glover was Bruce Lee's first student in America. He taught his methods to select students and appeared with Bruce Lee in a number of martial arts demonstrations in the US.

a class go through their training and I wasn't very impressed by what I saw. The things that they did didn't look like they would be too effective in a fight. What I saw seemed to be a mixture of boxing and kicking and the students displayed little of the skills of either group. I didn't ask how long the members of the group had practised so there is a possibility that they hadn't been at it that long.

I did get a chance to watch Inosanto move and he is quite quick and smooth, but seems to lack power. What he is really good at is escrima (kali, arnis de mano), which is fighting with sticks and knives. In this area his skill is first-rate, but this was not reflected in his Gung Fu.

A year or so ago I met a man who had trained at the school in Los Angeles and he had finally left because he felt that he wasn't learning anything. This guy is a very effective fighter who has worked in some of the tougher night clubs of Chicago as a bouncer. He is only 5ft 5ins so he has had to prove himself repeatedly, and he feels that there isn't much to learn in Los Angeles. He said that he had sparred with one of the inner circle of Jeet Kune Do members and that he had scored on him with ease. One of my former students had done the same thing with one of the inner circle Jeet Kune Do students in Oregon. He said that he had little difficulty in getting in on and controlling the actions of this guy and he felt that whatever it was that the guy might know was something that he couldn't do in practice.

Merry Christmas to all our readers...

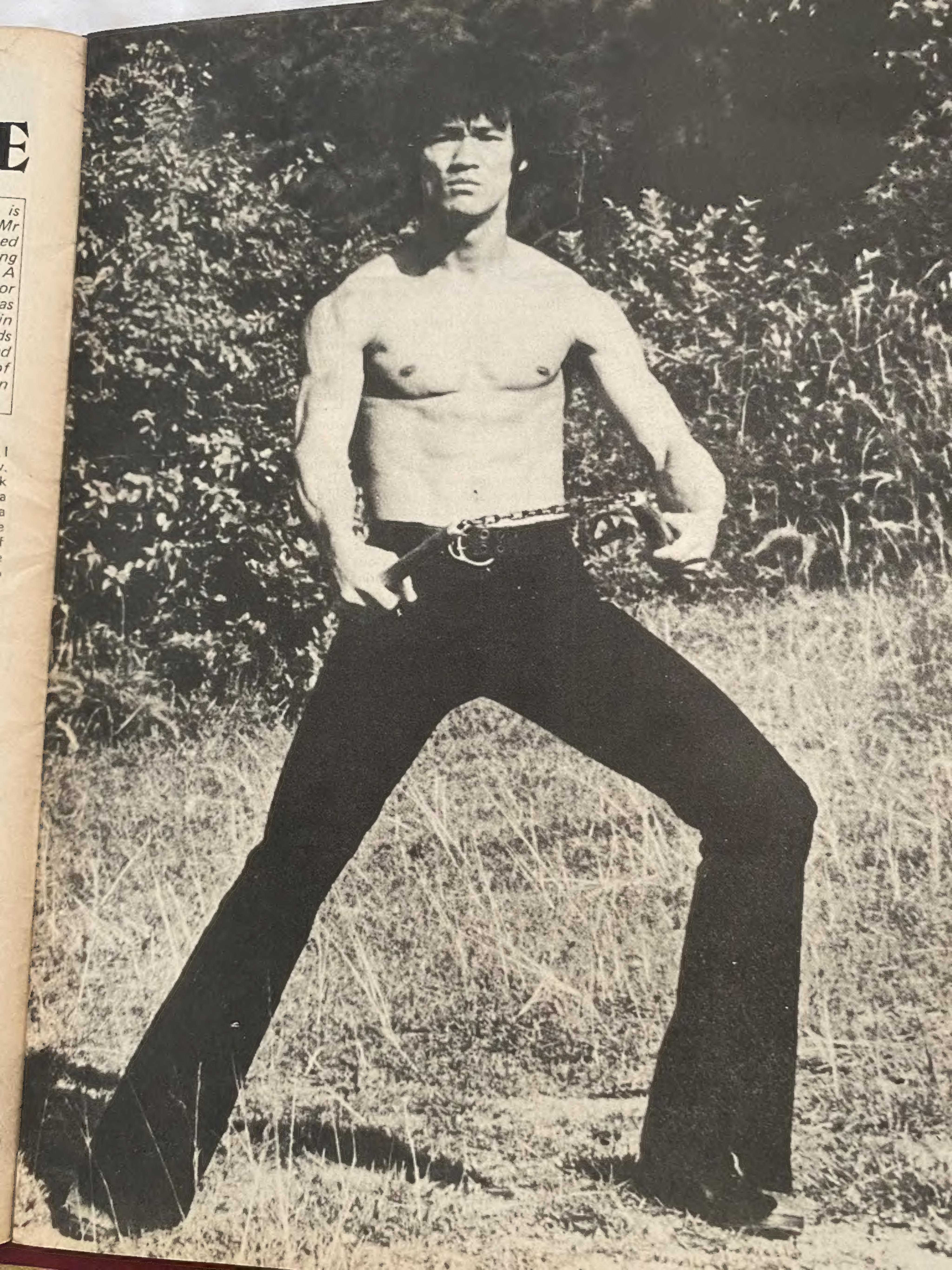
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early February!

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BRUCE LEE

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It seems to me that Bruce didn't transmit to these later students a very effective way of fighting. While Bruce could do the things himself, I do believe that much of the technique was based on the development of speed and power which was so great that it could overcome an opponent before he had the chance to react. At any rate, I am grateful for the opportunity that I had to meet Bruce at the time I did, and to be able to watch and experience many of the changes that he went through.

In my second book, which is being printed now, I have tried to introduce part of the course that Bruce followed in his development, and present many of the techniques that he used, and why he made changes in some applications of Wing Chun technique. There is also a section on Wong in Hong Kong, and a little about his approach to fighting, which sounds almost word-for-word like the things that I learned from Bruce in '59. In part of the material that I got from Wong he says that he considers you to be a better Wing Chun man than Bruce, and that you were particularly better in the area of sticking hands.

During my research for the book I learned that Bruce and you were good friends and that he followed you around. I was told that you had a great deal to do with Bruce's training in Wing Chun and that Bruce was first a follower of yours before he began to learn from either Wong or from Yip Man. I was a little unclear as to the status of Bruce as a student of Yip Man's. Apparently there were only a handful of students who were considered to be students by the late Yip Man — and Bruce was not one of them. What I am thinking is that you can be taught things by someone of the stature of Yip Man and still not be considered a formal student, and that this is what Bruce experienced. I would appreciate if you could clarify this for me.

The more I heard about your relationship with Bruce, the more I heard things that he said about you which I had heard Bruce say about himself. Like having to sneak out to practise, and a few other things. What I heard made me think that Bruce kind of took things from those who he admired, like yourself, and that he made these things part of his own story.

You are certainly one of the top

Wing Chun men in the world and as such, I am sure that your experiences with Wing Chun as a fighting system would be of great interest to many people in the martial arts world. The relationship that you had with Bruce is unique because you helped to create the man and had a lot to do with his development. In addition to this you were both his friend and, in a sense, his hero. I am sure that your impressions of Bruce are unique and enlightening. (Regular readers of A.F.A. will recall that these impressions were published in Vol 3, No 2 and No 3. Ed.) I would like to present to the world a more realistic view of the man, created by those who were there in the beginning. At the same time, I would like to show to the world that people of the same calibre still exist, and present you and Wong as two of them...

What kind of a system did you find Tai Chi to be and did you talk much to Bruce about it? From the way that he spoke about it, he felt that it had better principles than Wing Chun, but that it was questionable if these principles could be applied. Bruce said that you left this method because you found it not to be too practical in the street. Was that the reason? How do you rate it with Wing Chun? Bruce told me that you and Wong were the people who made the reputation for Wing Chun as a fighting system in Hong Kong and I would like to hear about your experiences against other systems in the Hong Kong area.

I don't know how you feel about one of your juniors getting all of the recognition that Bruce got while you and others like you remain known to only a few, but I would like to rectify this. And the best way that I know how to do this is to make clear in my new book the association between you and Bruce, and then to break off into the theme that you are an equal in your own right; and that your skill is in the same range as Bruce was. I would like to establish to the world that, in addition to being a friend and a teacher to Bruce, who is to be regarded as an authority on the early period of Bruce's life, that you are also one of the foremost authorities on Wing Chun.

Have you seen any of Bruce's movies and, if so, what did you think of them? A lot of the stuff that he did with the legs was stuff that he had told me never to use because it was unsafe. I think that the reason that he used the legs so much in the movies was twofold: Firstly, he knew that few people are going to get excited over the use of quick hand techniques, no matter how fast they are. Secondly,

Bruce really didn't want people to know just how he would really fight. At any rate, I can see many of the things that he taught when I first met him pertaining to the use of the hands. It seems to me that the later movies that he made reflected more of the stuff that he would use in a fight — particularly "Return of the Dragon", where he fought Norris.

I have the feeling that Bruce was, in fact, trying to develop a super Wing Chun system and that, had he lived, his stuff would have looked more and more like Wing Chun. This is not to say that in some ways it didn't look like Wing Chun in some aspects. I'm sure that if you did see his movies that you could see things in them that no one else could see; and that many of the things that he could do with ease against people in other systems would be things which would be easily countered by a top Wing Chun man like yourself.

The one area where I think Bruce really changed his whole approach was in the area of leg training. When I knew Bruce he was just beginning to work on the development of a side kick and had nothing like a high roundhouse kick. This was all stuff that he developed after I knew him.

The way that I learned from Bruce when he first came here was rough, but very effective. I got more than my share of lumps and bruises, but I learned. Later, when I began to teach, I taught the same way that I had learned, and discovered that most students couldn't handle my method of instruction. So I ended up teaching only a few people who were willing to learn the hard way. Over the years I have turned out some fairly effective fighters who don't look so smooth and flashy, but do well in street fights.

I have heard that your classes are also rough and I was wondering how you have fared at keeping students over the years?

— Jesse R. Glover, Seattle, Washington, U.S.A.

Goju Nationals

The 1978 National Goju Championships will be held at the NSW Basketball Stadium, Alexandria, Sydney, on Sunday December 10. There will be individual and interstate team championships, and demonstrations by visiting instructors.

The eliminations begin at 10am. For further information contact tournament director, Mr Paul Starling, phone (Syd) 477 1429.

FIGHTING ARTS

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